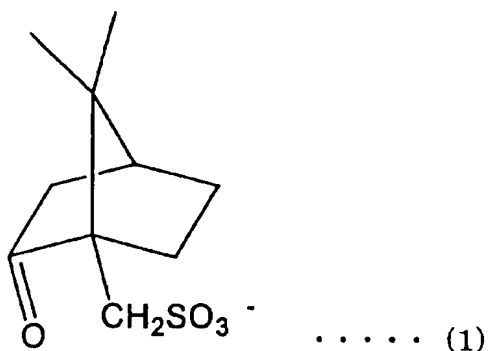


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A negative resist composition comprising at least an alkali-soluble resin, a cross-linking agent which is cross-linked with the alkali-soluble resin by the action of an acid, and an onium salt as a photoacid generator, in which the anion component of the onium salt is ~~at least a~~ sulfonate having a polycyclic structure.
2. (original) The negative resist composition according to claim 1 further comprising an acidic compound and/or a basic compound.
3. (currently amended) The negative resist composition according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein the polycyclic structure is at least one selected from a group consisting of adamantane, tricyclodecane, tetracyclodecane, isobornyl, norbornane, adamantane alcohol, norbornane lactone, and derivatives thereof.
4. (currently amended) The resist composition according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the anion component of the onium salt is a sulfonate represented by the following general formula (1).



5. (currently amended) The negative resist composition according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 1, wherein the cation component of the onium salt is an iodonium salt.

6. (currently amended) A method for forming a resist pattern comprising the steps of: forming at least a photoresist layer on a substrate using the negative resist composition according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1, and forming the desired photoresist pattern by applying exposure and development processes to the photoresist layer.

7. (new) The negative resist composition according to claim 2, wherein the polycyclic structure is at least one selected from a group consisting of adamantane, tricyclodecane, tetracyclodecane, isobornyl, norbornane, adamantane alcohol, norbornane lactone, and derivatives thereof.